

Delaware farmers' markets sales hit \$2.9 million

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DOVER – Delawareans still value local foods and farm-fresh products as demonstrated by a strong 2016 farmers' market season with over \$2.9 million dollars in direct sales, the Delaware Department of Agriculture announced today.

"Delaware's farmers' markets play an important role in providing delicious fruits, vegetables, and value-added products to both rural and urban communities across our state," said DDA's marketing specialist David Smith. "We really want the farmers and the customers to get to know each other so they can have a conversation about food and how it impacts the community where the market runs."

Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse agreed, "People want that connection with their neighbors and nearby farms. These trends are being driven by Delaware residents and those visiting our state who have become more and more interested in where they get their food from. Increasingly, that means going local – either buying directly from a farmer at a farmers' market or farm stand, or knowing that the food in their grocery stores comes from local family farms."

Sales from all 25 First State community-run farmers' markets this year totaled \$2,901,081. Although overall sales were slightly down from 2015's record-breaking year, Smith said, "It was a profitable season for most of the markets if you factor in a very wet spring and a dry, humid August that affected attendance. Many of our markets battled the somewhat inclement weather by offering live music, cooking demonstrations, and fun festivals focusing on a specific commodity, and operating under a 'rain or shine' policy."

Fresh produce made up 55 percent of total sales, with the remainder coming from products such as meats, cheeses, jellies, breads, salsa, eggs, or honey.

Delaware farmers' markets are all run at the local level, by municipalities, business groups, farmers or market associations, with the Department of Agriculture providing support and marketing assistance.

The 2017 market season will begin in April; most markets start their operations in May, June and July. There is currently one winter market open for the season, in Millsboro. A list of the 2016 markets is online at Delaware's Buy Local Guide, de.gov/buylocal, and will be updated by mid-March for 2017.

Farmers and others interested in becoming a vendor, or community groups interested in starting a local market, can contact Department of Agriculture marketing specialist David Smith at (302) 698-4625 or davidm.smith@delaware.gov.

Delaware Farmers' Market Sales:

2007: \$289,706
2008: \$800,679
2009: \$1,121,024
2010: \$1,330,617
2011: \$1,794,265
2012: \$1,960,357
2013: \$2,107,265
2014: \$2,636,727
2015: \$3,029,831
2016: \$2,901,081

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